



This Central Pacific freight crew of 1883 consists of two brakemen, conductor, engineer, fireman and mascot. From "The Railroaders."

Latest in old west series

## 'Railroaders' on the right track

"The Railroaders," by Keith Wheeler; Time-Life Books, Inc., color plates, photographs, index, 240 pp., \$9.95.

This fifth volume of Time-Life's Old West series is just as entertaining as its four predecessors, and they were topnotch.

"The Cowboys," "The Indians," "The Trailblazers," "The Soldiers," and now "The Railroaders." (Next up: "The Forty-Niners.") Keith Wheeler has set down the history of the railroad barons of the 1860s who found the riches of Croesus in transcontinental tracks linking the "greatest industrial combine in world history."

Ruthless, rapacious, treacherous, greedy and grasping, the empire builders were more than deserving of every curse thrown at them. But, writes Wheeler, "They were men of their time, America's gilded age, when business ethics and morality itself, had reached a stage of giddy upheaval."

Much of what "The Railroaders" contains is available elsewhere; little of the Old West series is dealt from primary sources or from original research by authors, but the expertise of Time-Life editors in composition and layout, using the fine archives available to them, makes the series more than desirable.

To illustrate the enormous construction challenges faced

by the first transcontinental work crews and field engineers, the editors used a photograph of underground laborers pecking away at the two-mile tunnel in the Cascades.

The real charm of this series comes from the offbeat material so lavishly served up in its pages; here for a change are paintings and artifacts not ordinarily found in books of the genre.

A typical western railroad

station is represented in photographs which also show the Victorian elegance of a \$50-a-day private Pullman car; catch high-living cross-country junketeers at play; and offer a dramatic look at the great "crush crash" of 1896 in Texas. If it's an hour or two of pleasant reading and reminiscing you're after, this is the series that will pass an evening comfortably. — Harold Schindler.